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SUBJECT: ASMARA FACILITATION IS A NON-STARTER, SLM LEADER TELLS SUDAN ENVOY

REF: 11/22 D'ELIA-STEINFELD E-MAIL

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Josiah B. Rosenblatt. Reasons 1.4b,d

¶1. (C) Summary: Special Envoy Andrew Natsios met SLM Abdulwahid El-Nur on October 18. Nur said he and the SLM felt shunted aside by the U.S. and appealed for a strategic alliance to end the genocide in Darfur. SE Natsios emphasized the need to unify Darfur rebel factions and bring DPA non-signatories into the fold. Nur enumerated SLM conditions for joining the DPA, including a program and timetable for disarmament, and a process for wealth-sharing, accountability and individual compensation for victims of the genocidal violence. He claimed the SLM rebel movement was essentially united, apart from fissures produced by fiscal pressures. SE Natsios called for the SLM to prepare realistic estimates on compensation and to recall that compromise was part and parcel of negotiation. Nur claimed that the Sudanese Air Force had deliberately targeted the locations where the SLM had been planning to convene a conference of field commanders. Nur rejected Eritrean efforts to bring together the JEM and SLM under the umbrella of the NRF. He also rejected Eritrea as a peace process facilitator. Nur said he would not return to Eritrea, and later relayed to Embassy Africa Watcher that he would remain temporarily in the Netherlands. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Special Envoy Andrew Natsios met SLM Abdulwahid El-Nur on October 18. Joining the meeting were SLM representatives Mohammed Salal Risgalla from the Netherlands, Gaafar Monro from France, and Ahmed M. Abdalla, who purported to be a university professor in Canada. SE COS Andrew Steinfeld and Embassy Paris Africa Watcher also participated.

¶3. (C) SLM Abdulwahid El-Nur appealed for a strategic alliance to end the genocide in Darfur. Nur, who is a leading non-signatory to the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA), complained at being shunted aside by the U.S. He claimed that Former Deputy Secretary Zoellick had dismissed Nur after Abuja with the words, "I'll see you next at the ICC." The USG had sought to strong-arm Nur rather than consider his SLM proposals. Nur said he would not participate in any further negotiations where the method of choice was intimidation. Nur discounted rival SLM leader and DPA signatory Minni Minawi as a creation of Abuja, who lacked a real Darfur constituency.

¶4. (C) SE Natsios stated that it was crucial to unify Darfur rebel factions, if only to thwart Khartoum's manipulations and exploitation of divisions. The DPA non-signatories had to be brought into the fold. SE Natsios asked Nur to clarify what Nur needed to come aboard the DPA. Nur said he had already communicated SLM needs in a letter he claimed to have had delivered directly on May 5 to the White House. Nur subsequently claimed that the SLM rebel movement SLM rebel

movement was essentially united, apart from fissures produced by fiscal pressures.

¶ 15. (C) Nur enumerated the following conditions for joining the DPA: a) a program for disarmament of militia, meaning the Janjaweed; b) a timeframe for disarmament and the establish of a coordinating body; c) a framework that would facilitate SLM operations alongside GoS military; d) a program for wealth-sharing, reconstruction and development; and, most importantly, a process for accountability for damages and individual compensation. Adviser Abdalla explained the SLM sought provisions for both corrective and distributive justice. Corrective justice related to the Darfur genocide, he said, and should encompass both accountability and individual compensation; distributive justice referred to transferring national revenues to the Darfur region.

¶ 16. (C) In response to Nur's request for a USG presence in Darfur, SE Natsios stated there would be no U.S. troops. The UN was the appropriate mechanism, particularly with regard to facilitating disarmament. In terms of financial needs, SE Natsios appealed for Nur to provide realistic estimates and to recall that compromise was part and parcel of negotiation. He underscored the need to deal separately with compensation and development. Nur was insistent that compensation should be made by Sudanese authorities drawing on national revenues.

¶ 17. (C) Nur claimed that the Sudanese Air Force had deliberately targeted the locations where the SLM had been planning to convene a conference of field commanders, bombarding the villages of Bil Maza and An Siro. Bombings, coordinated with Janjaweed attacks, had caused over 100 deaths near Kotum. The tribes under attack included the

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Mima, Zaghawa, Tundjer, and Khai in Tina, he said. Asked by SE Natsios whether Fur settlements were also being targeted, Abdalla responded indirectly that the SLM were striving to respect the ceasefire. He commented that the SLM could not foster unity among commanders if GoS bombings continued.

¶ 18. (C) SE Natsios asked Nur what were the goals for JEM leader and DPA rejectionist Khalil Ibrahim. Nur criticized Ibrahim, who, he said, continued to follow the lead of Turabi, especially on compromising with Khartoum. SE Natsios asked whether Ibrahim sought to establish a Zaghawa state, provoking a debate among Nur's colleagues. Nur stated that Eritrea had sought to cement a union between the JEM and the SLM through the creation of the NRF. Nur said there were major differences between the JEM and the SLM, with the latter, for instance, a secular movement hewing to separation of church and state. Eritrea had employed coercive methods, including his own physical abduction and detention at one point. Nur said he would not return to Eritrea, for fear of assassination.

¶ 19. (C) Nur vehemently rejected proposals for an Asmara-centered Darfur peace process. He equally rejected N'djamena and Tripoli as facilitators for a meeting of DPA non-signatories. Abdalla said the AU had failed in its facilitation of the peace process. (Note: French MFA told Africa Watcher that Nur and company in an November 17 meeting had vehemently rejected both a role for Asmara and the return of AU Chief Mediator Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim.) Abdalla insisted the SLM was ready to negotiate, adding that land distribution was a crucial subject. Abdalla also said only a UN force, only "blue hats," could bring peace to the region. Nur maintained an international force would meet with a "massive welcome" in Darfur. Khartoum's efforts to draw parallels between Darfur and Iraq were fallacious. Darfur, Nur claimed, would be more likely to resemble an operation in Afghanistan, with a humanitarian premise.

10, (C) SE Natsios worried that the prospects for the Darfur-Darfur dialogue were receding due to the massive

killings of local Masalit chiefs in West Darfur in 2004. The U.S. understood some 5,000 chieftains had been murdered and replaced with GoS designees. Nur responded that there continued to be legitimate leadership within Darfur, with successors to the murdered chieftains selected from within IDP and refugee camps.

¶11. (C/NF) At the meeting's close, Nur asked for a one-on-one discussion with SE Natsios in which he requested the USG provide one million dollars in financing. SE Natsios said it was unlikely we would approve this funding. Ahmed Abdalla asked for training and capacity building in mediation, negotiating, and leadership for their people in the camps. Natsios said he would work on this through the U.S. Institute for Peace.

¶12. (C) Nur telephoned Embassy Africa Watcher on 11/21 and stated he would remain in the Netherlands for the time being (ref). Nur cast aspersions on the 11/22 Tripoli mini-summit on Darfur and related efforts at mediation by Egypt. He described Tripoli as a dilatory measure that sought to complicate divisions on Darfur and further delay an accommodation with the UN on engagement and deployment.

¶13. (U) Special Envoy Natsios cleared this message.

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